



Washington Sea Grant  
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December 20, 2021

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Governor  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee:

On behalf of the Washington Sea Grant (WSG), I am writing to express support for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's December 14 request for emergency measures to address the imminent danger of infestation from European green crab that seriously threatens the environment, economy and well-being of the state of Washington.

Washington Sea Grant has partnered with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), tribes, federal and other state agencies, and volunteers since 2015 to develop and sustain capacity to manage invasive European green crab in Washington. The WSG Crab Team program provides early detection and monitoring at more than 50 sites in the Salish Sea, and it was this network that first detected green crab in Washington inland waters in 2016. In more recent years, Washington Sea Grant has expanded capacity to provide additional scientific and technical support to WDFW, tribes and others to inform local response efforts at Dungeness Spit, Makah Bay, Drayton Harbor, Lummi Sea Pond, Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor.

While management efforts to control small localized populations in places like Dungeness Spit and Drayton Harbor have shown signs of success (i.e., reduced capture rates) in recent years, population growth in the Lummi Sea Pond has been exponential, despite significant trapping efforts in 2021. The recent [\*disaster declaration made by the Lummi Indian Business Council\*](#), highlights both the threat to tribal resources, and the need for increased control measures to effectively protect both the reservation, as well as the region, from accelerated spread and impacts of the invasion.

In addition to the imminent danger in the Salish Sea, green crab populations are more abundant and geographically widespread in the coastal estuaries (Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor) than previously observed, at any time since the first confirmed detection in Washington State in 1998. In these coastal estuaries (including Makah Bay), which do not currently have a management plan for green crab, there appears to be significant green crab population increases at all trapping locations during the 2020 – 2021 period. This observation supports the inference that green crab populations in Washington coastal estuaries will not decline without intervention. While data on local impacts are lacking, it is likely that green crab densities in some areas are at levels that could cause measurable impacts to environmental, economic and cultural resources.

Unchecked, green crab in Washington threaten to:

- disrupt production of the nation's highest-valued shellfish industry;
- damage productive salt marshes and eelgrass beds that are critical Dungeness crab, salmon, forage fish and waterfowl habitat;
- reduce the number of Chinook salmon, which support fisheries and orca recovery;
- harm recreational and cultural resources upon which the region's tribes and other communities rely; and
- impact commercial and tribal fisheries worth more than \$320 million annually.

Washington Sea Grant is committed to working with WDFW, tribes and others to protect the valuable environmental, economic and cultural resources of Washington from this highly invasive species. Please do not hesitate to contact me ([wrc4@uw.edu](mailto:wrc4@uw.edu); 240.498.6106) if you have any questions about this critical threat to our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Russell Callender". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "W." being prominent.

W. Russell Callender  
Director, Washington Sea Grant